

# Iambic Pentameter

As we discussed, an **iambic unit** is one unstressed syllable followed by one stressed syllable. Many writers of the time used iambic pentameter throughout their poetry. Shakespeare used it extensively but did vary the iambic pentameter for variety and emphasis. Sometimes he inserted an extra syllable, other times he started a line with a stressed syllable.

**To determine which words from the list below are iambic, begin by drawing a slash mark (/) between the first and second syllables of each word. Then say the words aloud and mark the syllables with diacritical (stress ´ or unstress ~) marks. Finally, circle the words that are iambic.**

today	minute (time)	minute (size)	refuse (deny)
refuse (garbage)	sweetest	arise	touching
appeal	confess	abuse	tender
deceive	remove	parrot	unwrap

iambic pentameter contains five iambic units in one line. To identify it, follow these guidelines:

1. Read the lines aloud.
2. Mark all multi-syllabic words appropriately with diacritical (“unstressed” and “stressed”) marks.
3. Mark all one-syllable nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs with a stress.
4. Mark all the words that are left with “unstressed” marks.

**Example: You spotted snakes with double tongue beware.**